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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD(CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P, IIP/G/NEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN ONLINE: HEALTH CARE, A DISMISSAL, AND DENMARK

1. Summary: The Omani Internet message board "al-Sablah" is the liveliest and most comprehensive Arabic-language forum for political and social discourse in the country, touching on issues and personalities rarely addressed in the conventional media. While not totally free, nor wholly reflective of Omani public opinion, this popular site nevertheless offers a worthwhile window into the hot topics and unvarnished views of the day. This edition of Oman Online contains the following topics:

-- Omani health care takes a hit
-- American Prof fired in the UAE
-- Smoldering Anger at Danish Cartoons

End summary.

Malpractice Allegations

2. Pursuant to a recent interview of Sultan Qaboos by a Kuwaiti journalist, which was also published in the Omani press, al-Sablah posted critical comments by an Omani man whose son died in an Omani hospital, allegedly due to medical malpractice at least five years ago. According to the father, Said bin Jadad, the Omani Ministry of Health refuses to release the file detailing the circumstances of his son's death. Bin Jadad wrote to Kuwaiti journalists, "I challenge you to publish my questions about the deteriorating health services and daily medical negligence in Omani hospitals. Why is a citizen whose son died in hospital denied the chance to investigate?" (Note: The bin Jadad case is well known to al-Sablah participants, as he has made his case in the chat room many times over the years. End note.) One al-Sablah member responded by writing that "We hope you try to contain your argument within Oman and don't spread it worldwide by writing to different papers and sites." While some al-Sablah participants saw bin Jadad's comments as overly negative, others supported his right to investigate his son's death. The topic generated 1,746 hits and 12 responses.

Firing of American Professor

3. Most al-Sablah members supported the decision by the UAE's minister of education to fire an American English language professor at Shaykh Zaid University, who distributed 12 controversial Danish cartoons to her students for a discussion about free speech. Most al-Sablah respondents supported a posting that read, "God bless him for this action, which will prevent others from doing the same." Another member stated that "this provocation from the American professor proves that Americans are part of the conspiracy against Islam and the Prophet." The topic generated 968 hits and 27 responses.

Another Demonstration

4. Al-Sablah has posted calls for another peaceful protest march against Danish cartoons, emphasizing that destruction of property will not be allowed. Many al-Sablah members agreed to participate in order "to defend the Prophet's name, as we Muslim's should do." No time or date for the prospective march were included. The topic generated 1254 hits and 32 responses.

Anti-Danish Cartoons

5. A cartoon portraying Denmark as a racist, Nazi country aiming to promote hatred among peoples appeared on al-Sablah. The cartoon pictured a swastika affixed to the Danish national flag, along with a figure resembling a crusader knight, with churches in the background. The topic generated 2343 hits and 25 responses.

Appeal to Focus Boycott on Denmark

6. Al-Sablah members warned about Danish companies' attempts to bypass the boycott by changing their product labels to read "made

in the EU." Al-Sablah noted that to thwart this, consumers can check the bar codes of products; the number "57" means a Danish product. One respondent called on members to "focus on boycotting Danish products for maximum effect, and to stop posting calls for boycotting other countries." The topic generated 703 hits and 9 responses.

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